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The Church and the War.

OUR DUTY AT HOME IN TIME OF WAR

BY

PAUL B. BULL, M.A.

Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield

THIRD IMPRESSION

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By the *Rev. Paul B. Bull, C.R.* With a Preface by the late *General Sir Charles Douglas, G.C.B.* New and Cheaper Edition, Cloth, 1/6 net; Paper, 1/- net.

THE CHURCH AND THE WAR

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OUR DUTY AT HOME IN TIME OF WAR

I. THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TO WAR

WHAT ought to be the Christian's attitude towards war in general? This question must be exercising many hearts of earnest Christians to-day, men and women who have taken Christ as the Master not only of their outward life, but also of the very springs of their soul, in heart and mind and will. Our Lord has taught us to be meek and gentle, to quench the flames of anger, to be ready to forgive. He says to us, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven."¹ And He teaches us, "Resist not him that is evil."²

This teaching of our Lord has been accepted by some not as a general guide in forming the Christian temper, but as a literal command to be applied to all cases without exception. The good Russian nobleman Count Tolstoy accepted and tried to apply these precepts as a cast-iron law which admitted of no exception. Mr. Stead on one

¹ S. Matt. v. 44.

² Ibid. 39.

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occasion asked Tolstoy "if he admitted no exceptions to his doctrine of non-resistance to evil; for instance, if he saw a drunken man kicking a child to death, would he not use force to prevent him? Tolstoy admitted that this was an exceptional case. A little while after he saw that to admit an exception invalidated his whole doctrine, and he wrote to Mr. Stead withdrawing what he had said, saying that not even in the case of a drunkard kicking a child to death should evil be resisted."¹

It is to be hoped that such an answer will shock the conscience of the whole human race; and it proves that the grossest immorality may be advocated in the Name of Christ if we substitute a dead letter for the living spirit. Our Lord, in founding His Church, did not write a book. As far as we know, He wrote nothing at all. He did not give us a code of rules; He gave us the Holy Spirit to be our Friend and Guide; and it is upon His inspiration we must depend for the interpretation and application of Christ's words. The Sermon on the Mount, from which these passages are taken, gives us the tone and temper of the Christian character, which we must strive to attain. And I have often seen our soldiers in the barrack-room and on the battlefield display this temper and win God's blessing on the meek and merciful and peace-makers.

¹ *A Peculiar People*, p. 305. (Maude.)

This temper will ultimately make all wars of aggression impossible. For all war springs from the lusts and passions of men, and is of the devil.

But while war is of the devil, God may overrule it for the fulfilment of His holy will. He may use it, as a surgeon uses his knife, to remove what is evil in order that life may be liberated into greater activity. Nothing happens without God's will. But we must distinguish clearly between His will of permission and His will of design. Sin and evil exist by God's will of permission, but never by God's will of design. So with war. Christians will loathe and hate it as the work of the devil, and do their very utmost to make war impossible, by changing this bestial economic system of unrestrained competition which makes war inevitable, and by quenching those lusts and passions which lead to war. But they will recognize that when every possible effort has been made to preserve peace there are circumstances in which God Himself commands them to defend the right, and uses a nation as His instrument in the surgical operation on the selfish heart of man.

I believe with my whole heart that this is the case in the war upon which we are now engaged, that God has bidden us to draw the sword and never to sheath it till His will is accomplished, and the tyranny of the German military caste

which for so long has turned Europe into an armed camp has been for ever shattered.

II. THE PRESENT WAR

England has been engaged in many wars in the course of her long history, and for some of them it is difficult to find justification. But our share in the war which has just been forced upon us is justified by every sacred instinct of our nature.

For years we have striven for peace by every means in our power. For years we have pleaded with Germany to agree to a decrease of armaments. For years we have risked our freedom. For years we have striven in our diplomacy to avert the appalling horror of a European war. During this crisis which has come so suddenly upon us we besought Germany to unite with the other Powers in a Peace Conference, and she *alone* refused. For weeks our statesmen have exhausted every art of diplomacy to avert this great catastrophe. But when we had striven to the last, pleaded and prayed for peace, war was forced upon us by infamous German proposals which suggested to us the betrayal of a friend and a breach of faith.

Bound as we were to France by our professions of friendship, bound as we were by most solemn treaties to respect and protect the neutrality and independence of Belgium, bound as Germany was by the same treaties not to violate Belgian terri-

tory, Germany proposed to us that we should consent to the very act which she had pledged herself by every solemn undertaking not to do. If we had consented faith and honour would have perished from among the nations, and the soul of Europe would have died. Sir Edward Grey gave the only answer possible to such shameful proposals, and his answer found its echo in every honourable British heart. In that answer England found her soul. In one supreme moment every discord was hushed, every wound healed, and the whole empire rose to obey God's call and to take up the cross in a righteous war.

There may be differences of opinion as to the wisdom of this policy from a selfish and worldly point of view ; whether the shattering of France and Belgium would have certainly involved the imperilling of our freedom in the future. We may leave such considerations to those who accept these debased standards. But there cannot be any doubt that we could not have accepted the German proposals without a breach of faith and a betrayal of honour, and we may thank God that He gave us grace to answer Belgium's cry for help. The Imperial Chancellor of Germany has publicly admitted that his nation has done wrong. In his speech to the German Parliament—the Reichstag¹—he admits that the violation of Luxemburg and Belgian territory “is contrary to

¹ *Times* Report, August 4, 1914.

the dictates of international law. . . ." "France could wait, but we could not wait. A French movement upon our flank upon the lower Rhine might have been disastrous. So we were compelled to override the just protests of the Luxemburg and Belgian Governments. The wrong—I speak openly—that we are committing we will endeavour to make good as soon as our military goal has been reached." That goal will never be reached. That wrong will never be undone until God, using us as His agent, has for ever shattered that military caste in Germany which has plunged Europe into a most bloody war, and trampled on the rights of nations, and laid faith and honour in the dust.

What, then, ought we who have to stay at home to think and say and do in order that we may take our part in the work to which God has called our nation and empire.

III. OUR THOUGHTS

What should be the temper with which we enter on this great crusade? This is an important matter. For in the long run it is the spirit which wins. And our Navy and Army when actively engaged in war have little time to spend on cultivating ideals. The call which summons them to war is the trumpet of the Day of Judgement when all the work of the past years

is to be tested by fire. The spirit of sailors and soldiers which will sustain them in action has been formed in the days of peace, in devotion to duty, in the forming of habits of discipline which will make them capable of self-sacrifice, "obedient unto death," in those habits of judgement which lead them to value duty and honour more than life itself.

The work of those responsible for the training of our sailors and soldiers, their conscientious devotion to efficiency in their profession or their neglect of this duty, all this comes up for judgement in the day of battle. S. Paul's words apply to this as to every other work. "But if any man buildeth on this foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is."¹

But while the day of battle is a day of judgement for all, especially for those at the front, this does not prevent the sending of reinforcements. Our sailors on the sea and our soldiers in France are only separated from us in bodily presence, not in spiritual reality. In the spirit-world they are closely knit into one with all who remain at home, and we have it in our power, if we have the courage to do it, to send wave after

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 12.

wave of spiritual force to strengthen their courage and endurance. If at home we are feeble and vacillating, depressed by anxieties, dejected at reverses which must occasionally occur, we shall inevitably communicate this coward spirit to our troops by the law which binds spirits into one. If on the other hand we at home are strong and calm and peaceful ; if we turn anxiety and gossip into prayer ; if we never allow our minds to be defiled by a thought of turning back till the work God has given us to do is accomplished ; if we have the courage to endure to the bitter end, the strong determination to face our Calvary, and to drain the cup of suffering, which our Father has given us to drink, to the dregs—if this be our spirit then we shall send wave after wave of spiritual force to strengthen those who are ready to lay down their lives to protect our homes. This spiritual force is generated chiefly in prayer, which will be dealt with later on. But the force of our prayer depends on the temper of our mind, and it is our duty to cultivate the right temper if our prayer is to prevail.

A. Our Souls

1. PENITENCE.

Since we believe that God has called us to win freedom for the nations from the tyranny of a cruel military despotism, we must desire

to enter on this noble work with a clean heart. So we must humble ourselves in the dust for those sins which have weakened the life of our nation—the neglect of divine worship, the luxury and love of softness, self-indulgence and drunkenness, love of pleasure and frivolity. We will not enter on this work with the brag and boast of empire, but with the humble confession of our sins.

The courage which is based on pride fades away at the touch of adversity. The courage based on penitence is only strengthened by suffering. In the South African War we always found that those who bragged most did least. An officer who made his confession and received God's absolution rose from his knees, and said, "Now I feel that I can face anything, whatever may come." So will it be with the nation. Penitence is the spring of progress and rock-like foundation of perseverance.

2. PEACE.

It is our duty to cultivate with great pains a calm and peaceful spirit. The real horror of war does not press so much on those at the front as on those at home. At the front there is no news, except false rumours; we know only our own little section of a great plan, the perpetual necessity of action distracts the mind from

useless worrying, wounded have to be cared for, and we have to grub about for food. But at home the heart has leisure to feel. Each blow falls on one who may have little to distract him from brooding on it, and imagination inflames the wound which pierces love. So those at home always suffer most in a war. Much of this suffering can be relieved if we keep a strong control over the thoughts and the imagination. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee : because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever : for in the Lord Jehovah is an everlasting rock."

When the *Stella* was wrecked some twenty years ago off one of the Channel Islands, the frightened passengers in the boats floated about in a dense fog for a night and a day. In one of the boats a lady, who was crossing to England to sing in the opera, saw how her companions were suffering from torments of anxiety. So she said, "Will you let me sing to you a little?" and standing up in the boat she sang in sweetest tones that beautiful word of God, "O rest in the Lord, put all your trust in Him"; and perfect peace came down on all in the boat till they were rescued.

England needs such strong, brave women as that, who will draw from the heart of God that peace which passeth all understanding, and

breathe it on others.¹ It is a duty to restrain excited talk and useless gossip, and turn them into prayer ; to go brightly and cheerfully about one's daily work ; to refuse to believe the idle rumours which circulate ; and to bear calmly the news of reverses which in a world-wide conflict are sure to occur from time to time. This will reinforce our sailors and soldiers, and support them in doing their duty.

3. PERSEVERANCE.

As the full horror of the war gradually reveals itself to persons of slow imagination some may be tempted to turn back, growing faint-hearted when they begin to realize the awful price that has to be paid for freedom.

We must face the worst which can befall us with a steadfast heart. Again and again we must remind ourselves that we were forced into this war most utterly against our will, by a proposal of treachery to our friendship, and our most solemn treaty pledges. Having entered on it because we believed God's call was clear, we must see it through to a finish, even to the last man and the last drop of our blood.

Nietzsche, the philosopher of ambition and

¹ Unrestrained excitement has already robbed us of lives sorely needed by the nation. A naval reservist gave way to such excitement, that on arriving at Portsmouth he had haemorrhage on the brain, which caused his death.

force, whose teaching has intoxicated the war-party in Germany with such a lust for power, mocked at the Crucified and His "slave morality" of gentleness and humility. We must show that the Cross can give us an invincible power of endurance, a face set like a flint, a courage which knows not how to yield, a determination to bleed out our life to its last drop sooner than abandon the work which God has given us to do till it is fully accomplished. Blow after blow may fall, life after life must be laid down, heart after heart will be strained to the breaking, but however great may be the cost we must never tolerate even a thought of disloyalty to the great mission on which God sends us. This is the spirit of steadfastness which is the grace of perseverance.

4. PITY.

But the courage which nerves us to face the full cost of this awful war will be all the more steadfast if we keep our hearts full of pity for all who suffer, whether our own or those of the enemy. First—pity for the poor in our own land.

In times of peace it is to our shame that millions live in a poverty which leaves little margin of security against the evil day when sickness will rob the home of its support. In time of war thousands of the poor see their only breadwinner march off to serve his country. Thousands will

not return to their homes. And our highest duty and greatest privilege must be to see that the homes of those who fight for their country are well cared for. Nothing can give more courage to the absent than to know that their dear ones at home are not in want. Our pity too must embrace all those whose homes are in the actual sphere of fighting. In Belgium and France and Germany thousands will see their homes laid desolate, houses burnt to the ground, the work of a lifetime destroyed. Let us who at present escape these most awful sufferings of war extend our pity to those who have to bear them.

And this spirit of pity will lead us to try to mitigate any hatred for those who fight against us. We may always try to believe that the vast mass of the German people have been misled by their rulers, and that the savage cruelties on the innocent Belgians are the work of a few and not the will of the many. So we may try to cultivate that temper of mind which bids us love our enemies, and we will retain the virtues of justice and righteousness which alone can win God's approval.

B. Prayer

But the supreme duty of those who stay at home is to liberate into activity those vast forces which God has made dependent on our prayers. If we pray with single-hearted fervour we liberate spiri-

tual energies which will strengthen our nation in this struggle for its very life. As long as Moses on the mountain uplifted the arms of intercession Israel prevailed. When he grew weary and his arms sank down the Amalekites prevailed. Our prayer is most prevailing when it is united with the prayers of others. And no prayer has such prevailing power as the pleading of the Holy Sacrifice in the Holy Communion.

1. DAILY CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION.

If your parish has not yet a daily Eucharist, unite with others in begging your priests to institute this at once. What prayer can be more appropriate than this divine action of the Body broken and the Blood poured out for our salvation, as we intercede for the wounded with their broken bodies and the dying with the blood poured out on our behalf?

I know that many priests would begin a daily celebration of the Holy Communion at once if three communicants will promise to attend. And the fact that this would involve for some an earlier hour of rising ought to be a most welcome opportunity for self-discipline. How can we shirk so small an act of self-denial when for our sake three hundred thousand sailors and soldiers are watching day and night, and patiently enduring endless hardships and privations in order that our

homes may be secure? A sailor's or a soldier's death is in a way sacrificial. He offers his life to God for his nation's sake. He does not die for himself, but for you and me. He may not himself know how to offer this sacrifice in the best way to God. But it is our highest duty to the dying and the dead to gather up these bodies broken, this blood outpoured for us, and to offer them in union with the Body and Blood of Christ to the Father.

So do your best to show forth day by day to the Father the all-prevailing sacrifice of His dear Son, remembering by name those who have gone forth from the parish to protect our homes ; praying to the Father Who gave His Son to die for us that He will comfort those who mourn, and wipe away their tears. For many a mother, like Mary, has given her son to die for us, and we owe them the support of our prayers : remembering the sick and wounded, the desolate and starving and homeless, before Him Who had nowhere to lay His head, and Who hung bleeding on the Cross : remembering too our enemies, learning to repeat for them our Saviour's prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." For the vast majority of those who fight against us and of the German nation are as innocent as we are of this great crime against humanity. At each Eucharist we will thank God for the courage of our statesmen who refused a treacherous proposal, for the unity He has given our nation, for the

courage and self-sacrifice of our sailors and soldiers and our allies, and for allowing us to take our part in a righteous war.

2. PRAY FOR THE DEPARTED.

Our Lord placed no limit to the reach of prayer, and from the earliest time the Christian Church has prayed for the souls who have passed away. This practice is universal in the Christian Church, and indeed it is a human instinct which finds expression in every form of religion. It is authorized for us by the authority of the archbishops and bishops of our Church in the petitions put out for the fallen—"In Thy redeeming love have mercy on the fallen." Or more boldly, as in the South African Church, "For all who are slain in battle and perish through the war, that Thou wouldst receive their souls into Thy peace, and deal with them according to the multitude of Thy mercies."

We are not called upon to judge those who pass beyond the veil. God alone is Judge. But we may believe that the Christ Who gave pardon to the dying thief is moving about on the battlefield receiving the last prayer of each soldier as he breathes out his soul. And those who die at the call of duty and in obedience to discipline will surely be acceptable to Him "Who became *obedient* unto death, yea, the death of the Cross."

And since they give their lives for the safety of our homes they are caught up into the embrace of God in the power of our Saviour's word, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

What can we do for these dear lads who so gladly pour out the rich life blood and the hopes of youth for us, and purchase our peace by this glad surrender of their lives? The least we can do is to pray many times a day the Church's ancient prayer, "Grant them, O Lord, eternal rest, and let light perpetual shine upon them." We may add, too, to our family and private prayers, an adaptation of the "Commendatory Prayer" from the "Office for the Visitation of the Sick" in our Book of Common Prayer.

"O Almighty God, with Whom do live the spirits of just men made perfect, after they are delivered from their earthly prisons; We humbly commend the souls of these Thy servants, our dear brothers, into Thy hands, as into the hands of a faithful Creator, and most merciful Saviour; most humbly beseeching Thee, that they may be precious in Thy sight. Wash them, we beseech Thee, in the Blood of that immaculate Lamb, that was slain to take away the sins of the world; that whatsoever defilements they may have contracted in the midst of this miserable and evil world, through the lusts of the flesh, or the wiles

of Satan, being purged and done away, they may be presented pure and without spot before Thee ; through the merits of Jesus Christ Thine only Son our Lord. Amen.”

(Cut this prayer out, and keep it in your book of devotions.)

3. MIDDAY PRAYER.

The Chaplain-General to the Forces has made the beautiful suggestion that in every parish throughout the Empire the church bell should toll at noon, and all the Empire offer up a prayer for our sailors and soldiers. This would revive an ancient custom, for in England before the Reformation the “Peace” bell was always tolled at twelve o’clock, when all men paused in their work to say the *Angelus*. The *Angelus* is a perpetual commemoration of the Incarnation of the Son of God, and of the angel’s salutation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, which announced the approaching conception. It consists of passages from Scripture, with a repetition of the angelic salutation, and a request for our Lady’s prayers, ending with the Collect for “the Annunciation” from our Prayer Book.¹

All over France and Belgium, the countries of our allies, the bell is tolled at noon and the *Angelus* recited : and it would form a real bond of closest union with our allies if we were to

¹ It can be obtained, neatly printed on a card, from Messrs. Mowbray. No. 332. Price 1*d.* each ; 7/- per 100.

use the same prayer, so beautiful in its bearing on our present sorrows, that "by His Cross and Passion we may be brought into the glory of His Resurrection."

4. FAMILY PRAYERS.

If family prayers have been allowed to lapse in your home, now is the time to revive them in gratitude to God for all the priceless blessings of home and peace and security. And in addition to the normal prayers the following may be added.¹

IN TIME OF WAR

O LORD God of Hosts, by Whose permission nation riseth against nation, Who usest their swords for Thy judgements, and at Thy will makest wars to cease; purify us, we humbly pray Thee, from all sin in our share of this present strife; bring it speedily, if it please Thee, to a right and lasting peace, and meanwhile—

For those who fight—that Thou wouldest give them protection and true courage in danger, and mercy in victory;

Hear us, good Lord.

For those who suffer—the sick and such as

¹ These Prayers are published separately on card. No. 70. Price 1*d.* each; 7/- per 100.

are in captivity, the wounded, the dying, the mourners—that Thou wouldest be with them for support and comfort ;

Hear us, good Lord.

For those who are gone forth to minister to the suffering—to their souls and bodies—that Thou wouldest grant them endurance and patient watching, with skill and gentleness, to the healing of pain and sorrow ;

Hear us, good Lord.

For all who are slain in battle, and perish through the war—that Thou wouldest receive their souls into Thy peace, and deal with them according to the multitude of Thy mercies ;

Hear us, good Lord.

And if it may be, O our God, overrule, we beseech Thee, all these things to the blessed issue beyond mere earthly peace, of restored brotherhood among nations, the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the reunion of Christendom in one faith and love. All this we ask, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake Thy Son our Lord. Amen.

In all our praying let us remember that prayer is the greatest force in the world, that if we pray with faith and concentrated effort, wave after wave of spiritual power goes forth from the heart of God, to guide our generals in their

decisions, to revive and strengthen our sailors and soldiers, to heal the sick and comfort those who mourn. And in all our prayers, except those for victory, let our enemies have a share.

C. What to do ?

1. YOUR DUTY.

Every young man who is free to do so ought to put aside his private hopes and personal plans and enlist in either the Home Defence or Active Service Army. If he has scruples about bearing arms, he can join the Red Cross or Royal Army Medical Corps for hospital work. But he has no right whatever to refuse to answer his nation's call, and to expect others to defend his home for him. It is a cowardly selfishness which at such a time, the most awful crisis in the world's history, leads a young man to pursue some private end instead of offering himself to the service of the nation.

The immediate, most urgent duty is to end this war as soon as possible. There are, of course, some exceptions, as certain aspects of the nation's life must be carried on. But it should be on the conscience of every young man to ask himself, "May I go?" "Is it a really imperative duty which keeps me from enlisting?"

Women can exercise a wholesome pressure of contempt for those who are inclined to shirk this duty of offering themselves.

2. WORK.

For those who are obliged to stay behind there is abundant opportunity of useful work—preparing to help the wounded, comforts for the troops, etc. But the most urgent duty is to be willing to do what one is told to do, so that effort may not be wasted.

3. WRITING LETTERS TO THOSE ON ACTIVE SERVICE.

I mean *really* writing and posting them, *not merely intending to do so*. It is no consolation to those who return, when the great loneliness of exile is over, to be told, "I was always thinking of you." What really helps is to put your thoughts and love into a letter and post it. Those who stay at home can never fully know what these letters mean to our lads in exile. War is not all blue murder; it is mostly brown monotony. War involves very little actual fighting; it largely consists of days of long weary marching and weeks of waiting, and hours of lonely depression, when the heart is "home sick," and longs for a touch of tenderness and love. And "mail-day," when the bags of letters and papers catch up the forces on the move, is *the* great day for the soldier. It was beautiful to see the heart-hunger with which men would seize their letter and read it again and again, and at last bring the precious treasure to me to read. It was infinitely sad to

see the look of hope die out of an expectant face when no letter came. Sadder still to hear one lad say in answer to my questions, "Haven't you a father? mother? married sister?" "No, sir, there's nobody on earth who cares whether I am alive or dead." But before an hour had passed he had found Someone Who cared very much, and knew Jesus as his Friend.

4. SELF-DENIAL.

We who are left at home can do something to share the sufferings of those who represent us at the front, by sea or land, by stripping off every luxury and cultivating a stern simplicity of life. Self-denial in food will strengthen the nation by increasing the available food supply; and before peace is again ours there will be much scarcity and want. Relief must be organized on a sound basis. Indiscriminate giving only encourages the imposter. More than alms are needed. Love and sympathy must bind the rich and poor together in bearing one another's burdens. Belgians, who have borne the most bitter sufferings of the war at the hands of a cruel enemy, have great claims on our gratitude. Our homes are so far safe under the protection of the Navy. But many of their homes are ruined and their villages burnt, and their fields laid waste. Their heroic courage saved France

and broke the power of the enemy, by the delay which ruined his plans. We must see that whatever gratitude can do is done.

God, in calling us to this work, has absolved our nation of its sins. For in spite of all our sins He has given us grace to answer His call, and to be faithful and true. It will make great demands on our steadfastness, courage, and endurance to do our share in shattering for ever, please God, the cruel and perjured military caste of Germany who have plunged Europe into war. But there never was a cause more noble; not only our own freedom, but the freedom of those who trusted us. Faithful and true in the beginning—faithful to our friends, true to our treaties—we must have the courage to be faithful and true to the end. He Who called us to this work will give us strength to finish it.

“I saw the heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He that sat thereon, called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He doth judge and make war.”

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